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# Santa Cruz City Schools trustees approve \$55 million budget

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**SANTA CRUZ** — The last board meeting of the fiscal year for Santa Cruz City Schools went well into the night, as trustees and school administrators met to approve the district's 2010-2011 budget in time to present it to the County Office of Education.

To bridge a \$5.4 million gap in a proposed \$55.7 million budget, district officials plan to defer some maintenance issues, cut most adult education programs and shorten the 2010-2011 school year by one week. Teachers and non-instructional employees also opted for a more expensive health plan to offset an unexpected increase in health costs to the district. Administrators opted to take a nine-day furlough.

"There will be program reductions and class size increases," said Diane Morgenstern, assistant superintendent of educational services, "but modestly so compared to districts up and down California." Morgenstern then listed some of the benefits remaining in the district, including smaller class sizes in grades K-6 than neighboring districts, arts and music and life labs. Some of these items are funded in part by parcel taxes, which will bring in \$3.7 million next year.

The district's budget was prepared based on the May revised state budget, which may change on its way to approval this summer. The district's budget is due by June 30 to the County Office of Education.

Before the budget hearing, trustees listened to several curriculum items, including success in Advanced Placement examinations and challenges in getting minority students to take AP courses.

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They also discussed the first year of a scratch-cooking program in schools, directed by chef Jamie Smith. The pilot year of the project saw a slight decrease overall in students opting for school meals, especially breakfast. Board President Rachel Dewey Thorsett said even if enrollment in the program did not meet goals, in a tough fiscal environment, the program didn't cost more than previous food programs.

"Now we can serve good food to kids at the same cost as serving in previous years lousy food to children," she said.

During public comment period, parents and teachers at the district's parent-education preschool pleaded their case one last time. The preschools are part of the adult education program, which was drastically cut. All teachers and administrators either lost hours or their entire jobs.

Parent Matt O'Hara spoke on behalf of the preschool supporters, asking the trustees to remember that the preschoolers from the program graduate into school leaders.

"In 12, 13, 14 years, we want those students ... to be the students making this district proud," he said.

Adult educators spoke on behalf of English Language programs, reminding trustees that parents in Santa Cruz County that don't speak English can't provide for their families as well.

The meeting continued late into the night, with line item budget questions and other public comments.